

PRECISION POSITIONING UNIT
AND LINEAR MOVEMENT CONTROL UNIT

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to a precision positioning unit and further to a linear movement control unit favorably employable for the precision positioning unit.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The precision positioning unit is generally employed in mechanical industry and electronic industry to manipulate an article such as a workpiece in relationship to working tools. A typical known positioning unit is illustrated in Fig. 7 of the attached drawings.

In Fig. 7, the positioning unit is composed of a table 71 on which an article is placed, a support member 73, a screw rod 74, and a rod actuator 75 which is connected to an electric source (not shown) and causes rotation of the screw rod 74. When the screw rod 74 rotates, the support member 73 and the table 71 in combination move forward or backward. When the table 71 reaches a predetermined position, the electric connection to the rod actuator 75 is cut, accordingly the rotation of the screw rod 74 ceases to stop the linear movement of the table.

The positioning unit of Fig. 7 can not satisfactorily function for precise positioning, because a series of the necessary operations, namely, the cut of electric connection, cease of operation of the rod actuator 75, cease of rotation of the screw rod 74, and cease of the movement of the combination of the support member 73 and the table 81 by way of friction, require a considerable time. Therefore, it is not easy to position the table at

the predetermined side very precisely, so long as the known positioning unit is employed. The known positioning unit also has another problem in that the screw surface of the screw rod 74 gradually wears in the course of its operation, and the worn screw surface is not appropriate for the precise positioning of the table 71.

It is an object of the invention to provide an improved precise positioning unit.

It is another object of the invention to provide a precise positioning unit whose precise positioning reliability is maintained for a long period of time, even after it is repeatedly operated.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a linear movement control unit which is employable for different uses such as control of a diaphragm valve installed in a fluid control system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention resides in a precision positioning unit comprising a table on which an article is to be placed, a linearly movable rod which is connected with the table at one end or a vicinity thereof and further connected with a rod actuating device at another end or a vicinity thereof, said rod actuating device capable of linearly moving the rod forward and backward, characterized in that:

the rod is connected with the rod actuating device via cushion mechanism; and

by the side of the rod is placed a rod movement control device comprising an elastic member, a ultrasonic transducer, and a ultrasonic emitting surface, the elastic member being constituted to push the ultrasonic emitting surface to a side surface of the rod when the ultrasonic transducer is inactive, and the ultrasonic transducer functioning to draw the ultrasonic emitting surface

away from the rod when it is active.

The invention also resides in a linear movement control unit comprising a linearly movable rod which is connected with a rod actuating device at one end or a vicinity thereof, said rod actuating device capable of linearly moving the rod forward and backward, characterized in that:

the rod is connected with the rod actuating device via cushion mechanism; and

by the side of the rod is placed a rod movement control device comprising an elastic member, a ultrasonic transducer, and a ultrasonic emitting surface, the elastic member being constituted to push the ultrasonic emitting surface to a side surface of the rod when the ultrasonic transducer is inactive, and the ultrasonic transducer functioning to draw the ultrasonic emitting surface away from the rod when it is active.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

Fig. 1 is a plan view of a precision positioning unit having a linear movement control unit according to the invention.

Fig. 2 is a vertical section of the linear movement control unit of the precision positioning unit of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a vertical section of the table and slide unit of the precision positioning unit of Fig. 1.

Fig. 4 shows an alternative contact mode between the rod and the ultrasonic emitting surface.

Fig. 5 shows an alternative contact mode between the rod and the ultrasonic emitting surface.

Fig. 6 is a plan view of an alternative precision positioning unit having a linear movement control unit according to the invention.

Fig. 7 is a schematic view of a typical known positioning unit.

Fig. 8 is a diaphragm valve control unit equipped with a linear movement control unit of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is further described by referring to the figures shown in the attached drawings.

10 In Fig. 1, a precision positioning unit according to the invention has a table 11 on which an article is to be placed, a linearly movable rod 12 which is connected with the table 11 at one end or its vicinity and further connected with a rod actuating device 13 at another end or its vicinity. The rod actuating device 13 is composed of a stepping motor 13a and a ball screw 13b and is capable of linearly moving the rod 12 forward and backward.

15 The rod 12 is connected with the rod actuating device 13 via cushion mechanism 14. The cushion mechanism comprises a spring as is illustrated in Fig. 1 or elastic material such as rubber.

20 By the side of the rod 12 is placed a rod movement control device comprising an elastic member 15, a ultrasonic transducer 16, and a ultrasonic emitting surface 17. The elastic member 15 is constituted to push the ultrasonic emitting surface 17 to a side surface of the rod 12 when the ultrasonic transducer 16 is inactive, while
25 the ultrasonic transducer 16 functions to draw the ultrasonic emitting surface 17 away from the rod 12 when it is active.

30 The rod 12 can be linearly moved forward or backward by the action of the rod actuating device 12 freely with almost no friction when the ultrasonic transducer 16 is active so as to keep the ultrasonic emitting surface 17 away from the rod 12. When the electric energy supplied to the ultrasonic transducer 16 is cut, the emission of ultrasonic from the ultrasonic emitting surface 17 immediately stops and, by the action of the elastic member
35 such as a pair of spring 15, the ultrasonic emitting

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surface 17 is brought into contact with the side surface of the rod 12, and the linear movement of the rod 12 instantly stops.

5 The precision positioning unit further has a frame 18 for supporting the stepping motor 13a on its surface, a frame for supporting the elastic member 15, a ultrasonic transducer 16, and a ultrasonic emitting surface 17 on its surface, and a slide element 20.

10 The structure of the linear movement control unit of Fig. 1 is illustrated in Fig. 2 by the vertical section. The ultrasonic transducer 16 preferably has in its center a metal plate 21 that serves for supplying electric energy to the transducer 16 from an electric source (not shown) and further as a disc support to fix the transducer 16 to the frame 19 with the elastic member 15 (such as a pair of springs). In Fig. 2, the transducer 21 is sandwiched between two solid members 22a, 22b and firmly combined to the solid members 22a, 22b by a bolt 23. This structure is generally named a bolted Langevin element. 20 The ultrasonic emitting surface 17 is formed by a friction pad which is made of friction increasing material such as carbon fiber-reinforced plastic material. In Fig. 2, the ultrasonic transducer 16 is inactive, and therefore the ultrasonic emitting surface 17 is in contact with the rod 12. The elastic member can be of rubber or other elastic material which is placed between the frame 19 and the solid material 22b. 25

30 As shown in Fig. 2, a pair of the rod movement control device are preferably placed symmetrically around the axis of the rod 12.

In Fig. 3, the table 11 is mounted on a substrate 24 by a slide element 20 so that the table 11 can be linearly moved on the substrate 24 with almost no friction.

35 Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 show examples the mode of contact between the rod 12 and the ultrasonic emitting surface 17.

In Fig. 4, the ultrasonic emitting surface 17 shape-ly protrudes at its center position, and the rod 12 has a groove on its side surface to receive the protruded ultrasonic emitting surface 17, so that the contact surface area can increase. In Fig. 5, the rod 12 has a friction pad 17a in the form of sharp protrusion on its surface at the center position, and the ultrasonic emitting surface has a groove to receive the protruded side surface of the rod 12, so that the contact surface area can increase.

Fig. 6 shows an alternative precision positioning unit according to the invention, in which the constitution differs from that of Fig. 1 only in the rod actuating device. The rod actuating device of Fig. 6 comprises a voice coil motor 63 which is connected to the rod. The voice coil motor 63 can function to actuate the linear movement of the rod with cushion mechanism.

Fig. 8 shows one of other utilization of the linear movement control unit according to the invention. In Fig. 8, the linear movement control unit is utilized to control the on-off function of a diaphragm valve 91. In more detail, a valve rod 82 is connected with a rod actuating device 83 which is composed of a linear motor 83a and a connecting rod 83b. The diaphragm valve 91 is composed of a pathway 92 for fluid, a valve unit 93, a diaphragm 94 and a seat for the diaphragm 95. The up-and-down movement of the valve rod 82 can be precisely controlled by the action of the linear movement control unit.